

Silent Spring Tops Century List:

**Carson's Recognition
has Duxbury Roots**

Duxbury's connection to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* took on greater significance this week with the book's ranking as number two on a list of the 100 best works in American journalism in the 20th century.

Second only to John Hersey's "*Hiroshima*," which appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1946, Carson's landmark 1962 book also first published in the *New Yorker*, was directly inspired from a letter sent to



Rachel Carson

her from Duxbury friend, Olga Huckins on Powder Point.

The century's best in American journalism released last week, includes a list of books, articles, columns, collected works, famous photographs, and television reports which were selected by a panel of experts assembled by the New York University School of Journalism.

Carson's book called public attention to the wasteful and destructive use of pesticides warning that they poison the food supply of animals and kill many birds and fish.

Duxbury Clipper

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Duxbury Connection to Silent Spring Author, Carson

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Silent Spring was written to alert the public and stir people to action against the abuse of chemical pesticides. In the book, Carson explained what poisons are and how mankind had not studied their potential harm. She suggested more research on the effects of pesticides on all life forms, and the alternate methods of pest control.

Clipper columnist Bob Hale, who was friendly with the late Olga and Stuart Huckins, said Carson visited her friend Olga on Powder Point.

Hale said he heard that the two women first began discussing the decrease in visiting songbirds which inhabited Olga's two acre bird sanctuary. Later, Olga wrote to her friend after discovering dead birds on her lawn following the aerial spraying of pesticides to control mosquitoes.

What finally led Carson to take a larger role in investigating the impact of pesticides was that letter from Olga in January 1958 relating the

spraying incident. Olga's anger took the form of a detailed letter to the *Boston Herald*. She sent a copy of the letter and a note to Rachel.

Years later, Carson wrote to

Clipper columnist Bob Hale, who was friendly with the late Olga and Stuart Huckins, said Carson visited her friend Olga on Powder Point.

Huckins saying that Huckins' personal letter begging her to find someone in Washington who could help had convinced Carson to write the book. She had first approached Reader's Digest in 1945 proposing an article about the dangers of DDT which was turned down.

Naturalist and Clipper Bird columnist Fahy Bygate said, "Rachel Carson was really the person who kicked off the whole environmental movement in this country. She was the one who got the word out about the dangers of pesticides when nobody else would."

Following publication of *Si-*

lent Spring, President Kennedy ordered the Science Advisory Committee to study the effects of pesticides. Mainly due to the book, over 40 bills were introduced to regulate pesticide use in various states by the end of 1962.

Carson was diagnosed with cancer before the book was published in 1962 and died in 1964 at age 57.

A panel of experts tapped *Silent Spring* ahead of such journalistic endeavors as the *Pentagon Papers*, *All the President's Men*, Edward R. Murrow's expose of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, and H.L. Mencken's Scopes Monkey Trial report in the *Baltimore Sun*.

Bygate said that unfortunately after the use of DDT was banned in the United States, chemical companies began selling it to third world countries.

The honor to *Silent Spring* is a wonderful tribute to a woman who had a very difficult life, Bygate said.